Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education Alaska Student Loan Corporation

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Diane Barrans, Executive Director/ Executive Officer ACPE/ASLC



Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education

Alaska Student Loan Corporation

The Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education, funded by the Alaska Student Loan Corporation, promotes access to and success in education and career training beyond high school. The Commission provides:

- programs creating early awareness of the importance of preparing for higher education success
- education planning tools and resources
- ◆ advocacy and support for postsecondary participation in Alaska
- financial aid for college and career training
- education consumer protection through institutional authorization and complaint investigation

While primarily distributed electronically, *ACPE Update* is available in paper format upon request.

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Legislative Recap

The 27th Legislature, which completed its second regular session on April 15, 2012, saw the introduction of several bills of interest to ACPE and to Alaska's postsecondary students. Most significant to the future of Alaska financial aid funding was the unanimous passage of HB104, which creates a long-term funding structure for both the Alaska Perfor-



mance Scholarship (APS) and the AlaskAdvantage Education Grant (AEG). The final outcomes of bills impacting ACPE are summarized below.

Bill: HB104 - Alaska Performance Scholarships

Current Status: Passed and awaiting the Governor's signature

Summary:

- Establishes the Alaska Higher Education Investment Fund (AHEIF), and provides for a transfer of over \$400 million to capitalize the Fund. The Fund is intended to be a self-sustaining source of long-term funding for the APS and AEG.
- Provides an exception to the course curriculum requirements for high school graduates who are otherwise eligible for the APS, including meeting applicable GPA and test score requirements. Otherwise-qualified high school graduates may apply for additional time to address a curricular deficit if failure to take the courses was due to reasons outside their control. If approved, they will have up to 24 months following graduation to satisfy this requirement. Approved students are eligible to receive APS awards if addressing the curricular deficit while also enrolled in postsecondary education programs.
- Postsecondary institutions enrolling APS students must provide mandatory academic counseling to
 those students, and they must ensure that the education program components are available to the
 students to permit them to complete their certificate or degree program in the appropriate length of
 time.
- Courses taken by students in middle school may be counted toward satisfying their APS course requirements if the courses are high school level.
- ACPE will be required to reserve a portion of APS and AEG funding for students who have graduated high school in Alaska school districts with total enrollments of less than 800 students.
- The Commissioner of Revenue will annually identify seven percent of the AHEIF as available for appropriation to APS and AEG on a two-thirds, one-third split, respectively.
- Establishes a series of corporate and business income tax credits for entities making donations to the AHEIF.

Bill: HB284 - Operating

Budget

Current Status: Signed into Law,

May 14, 2012

Summary:

Provides \$3.1 million in fund appropriations for the APS and \$3 million for AEG. The approved budget also provides for \$4.9 million to APS and \$1 million to program operations, contingent on the passage of HB104. Combined total FY13 funding levels for APS and AEG are \$8 million and \$4 million, respectively.

Bill: HB282/SB150 -

Military Training Credit

Current Status: Committee substitute for

HB282 (FIN) moved from

committee but not scheduled for floor vote.

Summary:

Proposed amendment to AS 14.48 (Institutional Authorization) by directing the Commission to require that authorized institutions provide credit for students who provide evidence of successful completion of relevant military education, training, or service as a member of the armed forces. At Commission staff's request the bill was amended to ensure these requirements raised no accreditation issues for Alaska institutions.

Bill: SB83 – Teacher Board Certification Incentives

Status: CSSB83(EDC) passed the Senate and was heard and passed

out of the House Education committee. Its next committee of referral was House Finance, but it did not get a hearing in the

waning days of the session.

Summary:

Proposed establishing a National Board Teacher Certification Loan Program, among other incentives, to provide a zero interest loan award of \$2,500 to eligible teachers seeking national board certification. ACPE was designated to administer the loan program.

Bill: HB78 – Loan Repayment and Employment Incentive

Program for Health Care Professionals

Status: Passed and awaiting the Governor's signature

Summary:

HB78 creates the Health Care Professions Loan Repayment and Employment Incentive program to be administered by the Department of Health and Social Services. ACPE's role will be to validate that a loan repayment applicant to H&SS has a qualifying education loan.

Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS)









In response to a solicitation from the federal Institute for Education Sciences (IES), an arm of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), ACPE led development of an Alaska application for a Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) grant. The Alaska SLDS's goal is to link postsecondary and career success data with the state's K-12 data system, in order to provide Alaska's policymakers, educators and citizen stakeholders with critical longitudinal information about Alaska's education pipeline, including student transitions and performance in postsecondary education and workforce systems.

As of the date of this publication, ACPE expects to receive a grant of \$4 million, to be expended over a three-year project period starting on July 1, 2012. The primary overarching goals of this project are to:

- develop a governance model with a team of leaders engaged in the practice of using data to inform decision making and who understand the value of this process for the state;
- create a secure, state longitudinal data system that allows data about K-12 students, teachers, college students, and industry to be linked together accurately and securely so they can be used to better understand and inform policy makers on the education to workforce cycle; and
- create reports, dashboards, and other information products that provide the right information
 to the right people in the right formats to better inform policy making and research; provide
 support to help the data users better utilize the system to improve education and workforce
 outcomes in Alaska; and, increase transparency around educational outcomes, generally.

A key component of ACPE's role will be coordination of the Alaska Education Data Sharing (EDS) team created by Governor Sean Parnell in **Administrative Order 261.** This order directs leadership of Alaska's primary education data-collecting agencies to coordinate data sharing, in order to provide the state with:

- Enhanced ability for education agencies to share data while ensuring Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) compliance;
- Enhanced ability to measure the impact of educational programs concrete outcomes in terms
 of postsecondary and career success, resident hire, etc. rather than just program costs and
 inputs;
- Enhanced efficiency for agencies relative to data management; and
- Enhanced protection of personally identifiable information through shared agency data governance and management protocols.

The first meeting of the Alaska EDS team is being scheduled for early this summer.

A requirement of the SLDS grant is that the applicant must be the state's Secondary Education Agency, and ACPE therefore submitted the grant application on behalf of the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (DEED). Although DEED will be the fiscal agent for the grant, the proposed SLDS structure calls for ACPE to take on a leadership role, with contributing partners being the University of Alaska and the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, as well as DEED.

Alaska Performance Scholarship Update

As noted in the legislative recap, passage of HB104 creates a long-term funding structure for both APS and AEG. Specific to the upcoming program year, FY13 funding levels for APS and AEG are \$8 million and \$4 million, respectively.

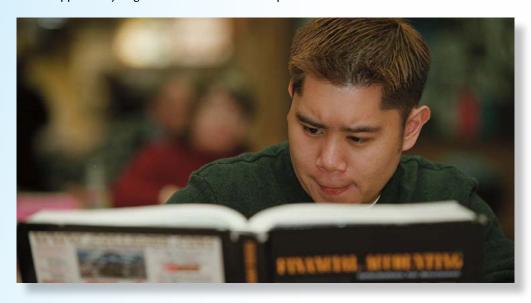
Of key interest to APS stakeholders was the **first annual APS outcomes report**, which ACPE released to the public, the Governor, and the 2012 Alaska Legislature on January 25th on behalf of its partner organizations. The product of a cooperative effort between the departments of Education & Early Development and Labor and Workforce Development, the University of Alaska, and ACPE, this annual report is intended to provide measures of the effects of the APS on student behavior and outcomes. This first report functions as a current situation analysis, by defining and measuring certain baselines of students' behaviors for future comparative analysis of how APS impacts recipients and Alaska education programs in general.

In addition to producing the outcomes report, ACPE has created an **APS statistics page on the Web,** providing periodic updates describing the population relative to use of the APS and their enrollment behaviors.

As always, the place to go for the very latest APS news is aps.alaska.gov. Recent site updates include:

- New detailed information on Continuing Eligibility for APS recipients
- Popular APS Eligibility Progress Checklists, available as fillable forms, on the Qualifying page
- Updates on proposed regulations impacting APS

Currently and over the summer, ACPE and partners offer Webinars for students, parents, teachers and counselors, as a forum for detailed information on how to qualify for APS and how to maintain eligibility and an opportunity to get answers to APS-related questions.



Commission and Staff Updates

In 2012, the Commission welcomed new member Kirk Wickersham, of Anchorage, representing the University of Alaska Board of Regents. As recommended by Board Chair Pat Jacobson, Commissioner Wickersham was appointed to the Commission by Governor Parnell in December 2011. He was appointed to the Board of Regents by Governor Palin in 2007. Wickersham is an actively retired attorney and real estate broker. He is the developer and owner of FSBO System, Inc., a company that provides professional coaching to home sellers, and a former chair of the Alaska Real Estate Commission. Previously, he was an economic development consultant and won a national award for innovative community development regulations. A graduate of the University of Alaska, Yale Law School, and the University of Colorado's MBA program, Wickersham has authored three books, more than two dozen professional journal articles, and lectured before more than fifty conferences, professional development seminars, and university classes. He is a member of the College of Fellows of UAA and UAF.



Also in 2012 the Commission adopted Resolution of Appreciation 12-01, acknowledging the extensive contributions of outgoing Commissioner Dave Rees, who represented the Alaska Workforce Investment Board and served as Commission chair from May 2009 through April 2011.

Most recently, at the April 2012 meeting, the Commission re-elected Rebecca Huggins as Chair and Sharon Charnell Gherman as Vice-Chair. The election of officers takes place at the last regularly scheduled meeting of each fiscal year.

This year also brings a number of staff changes at ACPE.

At its April meeting, the Commission approved Resolution of Appreciation for Commission Secretary Donna Vargas, who is retiring after 16 years of service to ACPE and to the Alaska Student Loan Corporation. In honor of Ms. Vargas's retirement, Executive Director Diane Barrans proclaimed April 30th to be Donna Vargas day at ACPE. Rochelle Rogers, currently Administrative Assistant at ACPE, was promoted to the Executive Assistant position Ms. Vargas filled, and will undertake the Commission and Corporation secretary roles going forward. Ms. Rogers can be reached at 465-6718.

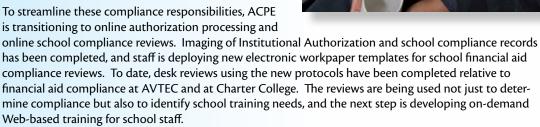
Another long-time Commission staff member retiring in May is Jo Anne Hayden, Institutional Authorization Program Coordinator. Taking on that role will be Kierke Kussart, who previously served as Claims Specialist at ACPE. Ms. Kussart will be the main contact for postsecondary institutions seeking authorization to operate in Alaska. She can be reached at 465-6741.

School Compliance Programs

ACPE's statutory responsibilities included the duties set out in AS 14.48, Institutional Authorization, which provides for education consumer protection by ensuring that postsecondary education providers and programs meet minimum standards set out in law, relative to institutional financial soundness, ethical business practices, academic soundness, and administrative capacity to deliver any advertised education. Postsecondary institutions operating in Alaska must be authorized by ACPE or determined to be exempt from authorization requirements. A list of schools authorized to operate, or exempt from the authorization process in Alaska, is available online.

Another compliance responsibility is ensuring that schools nationwide administering ACPE financial aid programs are eligible to receive those funds and administer them in accordance with all applicable requirements.

To streamline these compliance responsibilities, ACPE





Commission Meetings Scheduled
Thursday, July 26, 2012 - Anchorage
Wednesday, October 10, 2012 - Anchorage
Thursday, January 10, 2013 - Anchorage
Tuesday, April 2, 2013 - Juneau